

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE) FIDELITY REPORT

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To: Jennifer Baier, Senior Program Manager – Vocational Services

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AHCCCS Fidelity Reviewers

Method

On October 30th-November 2nd, 2017, Georgia Harris and Annette Robertson completed a review of the VALLEYLIFE Supported Employment (SE) program. This review is intended to provide specific feedback in the development of your agency's SE services, in an effort to improve the overall quality of behavioral health services in Maricopa County. Supported Employment refers specifically to the evidence-based practice (EBP) of helping SMI members find and keep competitive jobs in the community based on their individual preferences, not those set aside for people with disabilities. Services are reviewed starting with the time an SMI participating member indicates an interest in obtaining competitive employment, and the review process continues through the provision of follow along supports for people who obtain competitive employment. In order to effectively review Supported Employment services in Maricopa County, the review process includes evaluating the working collaboration between each Supported Employment provider and referring clinics with whom they work to provide services. For the purposes of this review at VALLEYLIFE, the referring clinics included Lifewell - Windsor and Southwest Network - Osborn.

VALLEYLIFE has a long-standing history in the Metro Phoenix area for providing a variety of services to Arizona's Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities (DD) population. In addition to serving children and adults with DD, the agency also provides services to persons with age related conditions, autism, traumatic brain injury, and serious mental illness (SMI). In the past year, the VALLEYLIFE team experienced some attrition in the Employment Specialist (ES) role, but the program management has remained the same from year-to-year. Over the past year, the SE program has been restructured; each ES now serves as a co-located specialist at one of three behavioral health clinics in the Metro Phoenix area, often serving multiple treatment teams throughout the assigned clinic.

The individuals served through the agency are referred to as *clients*, but for the purpose of this report, and for consistency across fidelity reviews, the term *member* will be used.

During the site visit, reviewers participated in the following activities:

- Observation of integrated treatment team meeting at the Lifewell Windsor clinic on October 31, 2017;
- Individual interviews with the SE Program Manager and Senior Program Manager of Vocational Services;
- Group interview with three Employment Specialists (ESs);

- Group interview with six members receiving services;
- Individual interview with one family support/guardian of member receiving services;
- Individual and group interviews with four Rehabilitation Specialists (RSs) at the provider clinics;
- Review of ten randomly selected member electronic and hardcopy records at the agency and the two provider clinics;
- Review of additional agency documentation and policies such as a sample of *Microsoft Office Outlook* calendars for the Employment Specialists, data tracking spreadsheets, sample job logs, VALLEYLIFE SE brochures, etc.

The review was conducted using the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SE Fidelity Scale. This scale assesses how close in implementation a team is to the Supported Employment (SE) model using specific observational criteria. It is a 15-item scale that assesses the degree of fidelity to the SE model along 3 dimensions: Staffing, Organization and Services. The SE Fidelity Scale has 15 program-specific items. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (meaning *not implemented*) to 5 (meaning *fully implemented*).

The SE Fidelity Scale was completed following the visit. A copy of the completed scale with comments is attached as part of this report.

Summary & Key Recommendations

The agency demonstrated strengths in the following program areas:

- The ESS' duties are focused entirely on job development, placement, and retention activities. These activities include: meeting with and developing relationships with employers in the community; resume building, job applications, interview preparation, new hire/orientation activities, and job retention.
- VALLEYLIFE and its affiliated referral sources were able to effectively articulate and demonstrate their commitment to providing services according to the zero-exclusion criteria. Members confirmed their ease of entry into SE services, denying any readiness criteria requirement(s) prior to enrollment. The SE agency receives referrals from multiple sources which include: behavioral health clinics, self-referrals, and peer-run agencies throughout the Metro Phoenix area.
- The ESSs are responsive to members who terminate employment; members report and the data suggests that ESSs help members to reflect on both the positive aspects and the challenges of their previous positions; using this information to inform their next job search.

The following are some areas that will benefit from focused quality improvement:

- Although staff report ongoing, work-based vocational assessment through the use of a Vocational Profile, few member charts contained evidence of these documents being updated and/or amended after the initial intake. Keeping work-based, vocational assessments (such as Vocational Profiles) up-to-date helps teams and future staff to stay connected to any changes to members' employment preferences.
- The SE team reports connecting members to employers within a month of enrollment on average; however, the data provided suggests that it takes an average of more than two months after enrollment for members to meet an employer. The team should work to decrease this window to 30 days for each member.
- The SE Staff reported their provision of Community Based Services between 75% and 90%; however, the record review suggests that the rate is closer to 59%. As often as possible, vocational services should be provided in the community, with a goal of 70% or above. This can include all types of services, from meeting with the member, exploring job types or employers with or without the member, and

providing follow-along supports. To resolve inconsistencies in reporting, staff must ensure that services provided are accurately and consistently documented in the official member record.

SE FIDELITY SCALE

Item #	Item	Rating	Rating Rationale	Recommendations
Staffing				
1	Caseload:	1 – 5 4	At the time of review, the VALLEYLIFE Supported Employment (SE) program served 109 members. The SE team consists of four staff: three (3) full time Employment Specialists (ESs) and one (1) full time supervisor. The team lost an ES approximately three weeks prior to the review. The SE Supervisor does not carry a caseload. All of the ESs are co-located at local behavioral health clinics; however, each ES is slated to serve non-co-located members who live closest to their assigned sites. The team’s member to staff ratio is approximately 36:1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue all efforts to employ an additional ES so appropriate member-to-staff ratios, 25 to 1 or less, can be maintained.
2	Vocational Services staff:	1 – 5 5	The VALLEYLIFE ESs provide only vocational services. The ES staff report that all of their duties are focused on job development, job placement, and job retention. ESs assist members with resume building, job applications, interview preparation, new hire/orientation activities and job retention. ESs report that they do not provide any additional support or services to members.	
3	Vocational generalists:	1 – 5 5	The VALLEYLIFE ESs provide all phases of vocational services to their members. Staff and members stated that ESs individually work alongside members from their intake until they obtain employment. Reviewers observed the ESs during their team meeting as they discussed new employer contacts made in the community, that could become potential employment opportunities for members in the future. The VALLEYLIFE staff also provided reviewers with tracking log of jobs they have developed in the	

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			community for members. Staff report that all members are offered extended support after obtaining a job. The supervisor reports that members who desire job retention services remain with the ES they are currently working with.	
Organization				
1	Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment:	1 – 5 4	<p>The VALLEYLIFE ESs are mostly integrated into the treatment teams they are co-located to serve. Each of the ESs are co-located at a local behavioral health clinic. The ESs and clinic staff report that the ESs attend at least one treatment team meeting per week, per team; in one case, the ES attends four meetings per week. Staff believe that they have decision-making authority on the teams, and multiple clinic staff described how having the ESs at the clinic has improved referrals and coordination of care between agencies. Communication between the ES and treatment team seemed effective and appeared natural in the meeting observed by the reviewers. While communication between the teams seems regular, the reviewers were unable to verify the ESs having three or more weekly case manager contacts in the record review.</p> <p>Although the teams report working well together, it was also reported that the ESs do not always attend the full treatment team meeting. In fact, the attendance duration was different for each ES; one staff attended the entire meeting, another staffed their individual members and would leave, while the third ES attended the majority of the meetings, but often left so they could attend the other team meetings scheduled at the same time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ES should attend in entirety at least one treatment team meeting each week. The team should revisit their attendance strategy for weekly integration meetings; explore any barriers to full attendance, and brainstorm ways to meet this criteria.
2	Vocational Unit:	1 – 5	The SE team is currently managed by one ES	

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		5	<p>Supervisor. The entire SE team meets weekly for group supervision to discuss job development leads, hiring events, employer contacts and challenging cases. These supervision meetings usually last for one hour. Reviewers observed the staff as they openly discussed job leads, upcoming job fairs, coverage needs, and effective interventions for their more challenging cases. The ES Supervisor also meets individually with each ES, every other week, to discuss their caseloads. Staff also stated they provide backup for each other's cases. Reviewers were provided with copies of the ESs calendars that are used to schedule appointments and to identify coverage needs when ESs are unable to meet with their members.</p>	
3	Zero-exclusion criteria:	1 – 5 5	<p>VALLEYLIFE and its affiliated referral sources provide services according to the zero-exclusion criteria. Both the SE and clinical treatment teams were able to clearly express their commitment to zero exclusion for the reviewers. SE staff said they assist members of all backgrounds, including those who may have criminal histories and sexual offences. VALLEYLIFE staff identified their primary referral sources as their three co-located clinics; however, they also receive member self-referrals and identified some referrals received from other peer-run agencies throughout the Phoenix Metro area.</p> <p>Clinical staff interviewed reported they do not screen members nor do they require any pre-employment activities prior to referral.</p> <p>Clinical staff interviewed stated that they quickly refer members to VALLEYLIFE services as soon as they state their desire for employment. One staff explained how having VALLEYLIFE co-located has made their “jobs easier” by improving their ability</p>	

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			<p>to get members connected to SE services “right away”.</p> <p>Members also reported that they did not feel limited by SE staff in any aspect of their services. Members said their clinical teams were timely in the referral process and did not require them to meet any criteria prior to referral.</p>	
Services				
1	Ongoing, work – based vocational assessment:	1 – 5 4	<p>The VALLEYLIFE team often provides members with ongoing, work-based, vocational assessment. VALLEYLIFE staff only requires a member face sheet from the referring team to begin services, but staff report that some members come to the team with a completed Vocational Activity Profile (VAP) from the clinical team. The ESs will complete a Vocational Profile (VP) within the first few appointments. Staff report the VP is updated each time the member desires a change in employment goal or job search preferences; however, only one amended VP was found throughout the member records reviewed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an effort to improve tracking members’ changes in employment goals through the use of vocational assessment tools such as Vocational Profiles. Ongoing, work-based vocational assessment helps teams to stay connected to members’ employment preferences – a critical feature in an effective SE program. • As members agree to disclosure, the SE team should also increase efforts to improve relationships with employers, creating a web of support for both the employers and employees.
2	Rapid search for competitive jobs:	1 – 5 4	<p>In the VALLEYLIFE SE program, the search for employment occurs relatively soon after intake. Most members interviewed reported gaining admission to the SE program between one and seven days from their initial request. They also reported engaging in the job search with an ES within a couple of weeks of program enrollment; some members have met with employers on the intake date. SE staff expressed that they aim to make in-person connections with employers within the first month of program enrollment. Though staff and members report rapid search for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program should continue all efforts to connect members face to face with potential employers within 30 days of program enrollment. Rapid search helps to take advantage of the member’s current motivation to explore work opportunities.

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			competitive jobs, the data provided by the team suggests that members receive their first face-to-face contact with an employer at around 71 days after program enrollment. Additionally, some SE staff reported that although they work to connect members as soon as possible, 60 days was a reasonable timeframe for first contact with employers.	
3	Individualized job search:	1 – 5 5	Most employer contacts are based on job choices identified by the member. Members reported that ESs focus searches on jobs they desire and are based on their needs such as pay scale, work hours, and proximity to home. Clinical staff stated that the SE team provides targeted job searches for members and gave examples of job searches that resulted in jobs in specialized fields such as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). The record review indicated that virtually all job searches were reflective of members' goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See S1 <i>Ongoing, work-based vocational assessment</i> for recommendations on the effective use of Vocational Profiles in an SE program.
4	Diversity of jobs developed:	1 – 5 3	In general, the ESs develop and provide job options that are in a variety of settings. For the data provided, it was determined that members were employed in the same work setting around 8% of the time and in the same job type about 39% of the time. Some members gravitated to customer service, janitorial, and cashier jobs. Staff reported that members may request similar types of jobs, but the ESs seeks employment that matches their individual preferences, such as proximity to home and work environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue all efforts to provide members with employment opportunities that are in varied settings with 10% or less duplication of employer or job type.
5	Permanence of jobs developed:	1 – 5 5	Virtually all of the jobs developed by the SE team are both competitive and permanent. The data provided to reviewers suggests that none of their current members are working with staffing agencies. ESs report it is more work for them when	

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			<p>members take temporary positions because when it nears the end of the position, staff need to restart the job search process again. Members report that the VALLEYLIFE ESs have not offered temporary or time limited positions to them. One member is employed in a temporary position, but both RS and ES report it meets the member's needs; she has had several barriers to obtaining suitable employment in the past, and the member is happy in the position. This member found the position on her own without ES assistance. ES staff displayed excellent understanding with regard to downfalls of temporary positions and warning members of such, as evidenced by documentation in records.</p>	
6	Jobs as transitions:	1 – 5 5	<p>The ESs help members to end jobs when appropriate and assist with the search for new employment. The SE Staff expressed their commitment to assisting all members when transitioning from a job. Members also verified staff involvement in their previous and/or current job searches after ending employment; many of them gave examples of how an ES was able to reconnect them to job search immediately after terminating employment. In the member records, reviewers found evidence of staff helping members to evaluate the factors contributing to separation from employment, while at the same time encouraging them to restart their employment search.</p>	
7	Follow-along supports:	1 – 5 4	<p>The SE team offers and provides individualized, follow-along supports to most of their members. Though agency leadership report that all of the employed members are receiving follow-along supports, ES staff reported that of the 39 working members, approximately 25% were receiving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to offer extended supports to all members who are employed. Optimally, most employed members will be engaged in retention activities until they are independent and

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			<p>follow-along supports. SE staff stated that the majority of the extended supports were delivered as weekly phone calls and emails, but the staff will provide worksite and in-person visits when requested. SE staff describe their interventions as opportunities to check in with members on their work performance, healthy relationships and/boundaries, and career path development. Staff and members also reported that there is no time limit for follow-along supports.</p>	<p>confident in their ability to maintain employment on their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximize opportunities to educate members on the benefits of extended supports early, even while in the job search phase. Build collaborative relationships with employers in an effort to increase supports for members. These relationships will be helpful when on the job support is critical to retaining employment.
8	Community-based services:	1 – 5 3	<p>Vocational services are often provided in the community. ESs estimate their community based services between 75% and 90%. Members also report that the ESs will meet them in locations where they are most comfortable; these locations range from local fast food establishments, to coffee shops and outside of members’ homes. Though the members and ESs estimated higher frequencies, the data provided reflected that the ESs provide approximately 59% of all vocational services in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As often as possible, vocational services should be provided in the community, with a goal of 70%. This can include a range of services, from initial engagement with the member, exploring job types or employers with or without the member, and providing follow-along supports. To resolve inconsistencies in reporting, staff must ensure that services provided are accurately and consistently documented in the official member record.
9	Assertive engagement and outreach:	1 – 5 5	<p>The SE team attempts to contact members and practices multiple outreach strategies, aiming to receive a direct decline of services from the member prior to closing them from services. SE staff specified their contact strategy for members who have missed appointments. Staff were unable to provide a written copy of this policy, but all ESs were able to articulate the process in detail. When an appointment is missed, the assigned ES will attempt to contact them by phone. If no contact is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though the outreach strategy is well articulated by the entire SE team, the agency should consider providing a written copy to all members and new staff to the program.

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			<p>made, the ESs report this absence to the clinical team in their next integrated weekly meeting, often requesting their assistance in outreach to the member. The ES will continue attempts to contact the member, as well as update the clinical team weekly. The ESs made mention of an Outreach Letter they occasionally send out if a member has not made contact with them or the clinical team for over a month; however, this is not a letter of closure. When asked about limitations to their closure policy, all SE staff stated that their outreach is not time-limited; members are not closed from services unless the members themselves explicitly request closure from services.</p>	
Total Score:		66		

SE FIDELITY SCALE SCORE SHEET		
Staffing	Rating Range	Score
1. Caseload	1 - 5	4
2. Vocational services staff	1 - 5	5
3. Vocational generalists	1 - 5	5
Organizational	Rating Range	Score
1. Integration of rehabilitation with mental health treatment	1 - 5	4
2. Vocational unit	1 - 5	5
3. Zero-exclusion criteria	1 - 5	5
Services	Rating Range	Score
1. Ongoing work-based assessment	1 - 5	4
2. Rapid search for competitive jobs	1 - 5	4
3. Individual job search	1 - 5	5
4. Diversity of jobs developed	1 - 5	3
5. Permanence of jobs developed	1 - 5	5
6. Jobs as transitions	1 - 5	5
7. Follow-along supports	1 - 5	4
8. Community-based services	1 - 5	3
9. Assertive engagement and outreach	1 - 5	5
Total Score		66
Total Possible Score		75